

Controversial New Study Claims Gossip May Be Good for You: Scripture Says Otherwise

A new study reported on by the Daily Mail is drawing attention for a provocative claim: People who gossip and spread rumors are more likely to be in romantic relationships and have children.

Researchers analyzed nearly 1,500 adults and concluded that what they call “relational aggression” – gossiping, spreading rumors and socially excluding others – may have offered an evolutionary advantage by helping people attract or keep romantic partners. The authors even suggested the behavior “could be under natural selection” in modern humans.

From a purely descriptive standpoint, the researchers identified a statistical association. They did not establish that gossip causes relationship success or larger families.

For us as Christians, however, the more important question is not whether a sinful behavior can appear to produce an earthly advantage. Scripture repeatedly shows that sin can seem profitable for a season while ultimately producing destruction.

The Bible never treats gossip as a virtue, a relationship strategy or a tool for success. Instead, it consistently portrays it as something that damages friendships, divides communities and grieves God.

The danger of calling sin an

advantage

Throughout history, people have justified sinful behavior because it appeared to “work.”

Lying can gain temporary advantages. Greed can produce wealth. Pride can bring worldly recognition. Manipulation can sometimes achieve influence.

That does not make those behaviors righteous.

Likewise, even if someone used gossip to damage a rival’s reputation or elevate their own social standing, Scripture would never redefine that behavior as good because it produced a desired outcome.

The Christian standard is not, “Does this increase my success?” It is, “Does this honor God?”

Jesus calls His followers to holiness, not merely effectiveness.



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Scripture’s response to gossip

Rather than encouraging gossip, God’s Word repeatedly warns us against it.

- **Proverbs 16:28:** “A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.” Gossip doesn’t strengthen relationships—it destroys them. Even close friendships can be shattered when rumors and whispered accusations take root.
- **Proverbs 11:13:** “A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals the matter.” God honors people who can be trusted. Mature believers

protect confidences instead of using someone else's failures or private struggles as conversation material.

- **Proverbs 20:19:** "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a gossip." This is one of Scripture's strongest warnings. Rather than embracing gossipers because they seem influential or entertaining, we are told to be cautious about allowing them into our closest circles.
- **Proverbs 26:20:** "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; so where there is no talebearer, strife ceases." Gossip fuels conflict the way wood fuels a fire. Refusing to pass along rumors is often the quickest way to stop division before it spreads.
- **Leviticus 19:16:** "You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people..." Even under the Old Covenant, God made it clear that spreading damaging stories about others had no place among His people. Our words should protect our community, not tear it apart.
- **Ephesians 4:29:** "Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only what is good for building up, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Before speaking, we should ask a simple question: Will these words build someone up or tear someone down? If they don't impart grace, they shouldn't leave our mouths.
- **James 4:11:** "Do not speak evil of one another, brothers." Speaking negatively about fellow believers is more than poor behavior—it undermines the unity Christ desires for His Church.
- **James 1:26:** "If anyone among you thinks himself to be religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless." James doesn't separate spiritual maturity from our speech. A tongue that is out of control reveals a heart that still needs to be surrendered to God.
- **Psalms 141:3:** "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips." David recognized that controlling our words is difficult. This verse is a

reminder to ask God daily for wisdom before we speak.

- **1 Peter 4:15:** “But let none of you suffer... as a busybody in other men’s matters.” Gossip often begins with inserting ourselves into situations that aren’t ours to manage. Peter encourages us to mind our own affairs instead of becoming consumed with everyone else’s.

Discernment in an age of conflicting messages

Studies can offer useful observations about human behavior, but Christians are called to evaluate every claim through the lens of Scripture.

If a culture begins celebrating a behavior that God warns against, our response should not be to adjust Scripture to fit the culture. It should be to let Scripture remain our standard.

Whether intentional or not, presenting gossip as something beneficial risks normalizing a sin that God repeatedly condemns. We are called to be people whose words heal rather than wound, unite rather than divide, and reflect the character of Christ rather than the values of the world.

Our culture may reward gossip for a time. God’s Word calls us to something better.

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